1: McGee NU31 Seri NU31

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[For the recorded history of the Seri see category 116, pp. 15, 17-19, 51-117, 126-130, 132-135.]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

000 between these stages and that next higher in the series with unparalleled clearness; their craft also displays an aberrant (and hence presumptively acultural) feature pertaining to the technolithic stage; and in so far as their craftsmen use the material typical of the age of metal they degrade it to the transitional substage between dominant zoomimicry and designless stone-using.

Viewed in the general light of their pacific industries, the Seri are, accordingly, among the most primitive of known tribes; their technic is in harmony with their esthetic, and also with their somatic and tribal characteristics, in attesting a lowly plane of development; while their industries, like their other demotic features, are essentially autochthonous.

WARFARE

175 721 Something is known of Seri warfare through the history of the centuries since 1540, and especially through the bloody episodes of the Encinas régime and the occasional outbreaks of the last decade or two. The available data clearly indicate that the warfare of the tribe complements their pacific industries in every essential respect.

As befits their primitive character, warfare has played an important rôle in the history of the folk, forming, indeed, one of the chief factors in determining the course of tribal development. There is no means of estimating the losses suffered and occasioned in warfare with the neighboring tribes during either prehistoric or historic times; but the indications are that they were much greater than the losses connected with Caucasian contact. Neither is it practicable to estimate reliably the fatalities attending the interminable conflicts with the Spanish invaders and their descendants, though it is safe to say that the Seri losses in strife against Spaniards and Mexicans aggregate many hundred, and that the correlative loss on the part of their enemies reaches several score, if not some hundred, lives. Few if any other aboriginal tribes of America have had so sanguinary a history as the Seri, and none other has at once so long and so bloody a record.

411 According to the consistent accounts of several survivors of conflict with the Seri, their chief weapons are arrows, stones, and clubs—though several survivors manifest greater fear of the throttling hands and rending teeth of the savage warriors than of all their artificial weapons combined. A striking feature of the recitals, indeed, is the rarity of reference to weapons; the ambushes or surrounds or chance meetings, with their disastrous or happy consequences, are commonly described with considerable detail; the carbines or rifles, the machetes and knives, or the deftly thrown riatas employed by the rancheros or vaqueros are mentioned with full appreciation of their serviceability; but the ordinary expressions concerning the despised yet dreaded Seri are precisely those employed in recounting conflicts with carnivorous beasts. When Andrés Noriega's kinswoman proudly related how he

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

CHIEFSHIP

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The unformulated tribal laws of the Seri are intimately connected with leadership, which is, in turn, largely a reflection of personal characteristics; so that the tribal organization is about as variable as that of the practically autonomous herds of cattle ranging the Sonoran plains adjacent to Seriland. Indeed, just as the stock-clans enjoy a precedence on pasturage and at waterholes, determined by the valor and strength of the bulls by which they are led, so the Seri clans appear to be graded by the prowess of their masculine leaders, combined with the sortilegic success of the leaders' consorts; while, just as the leadership of the cattle shifts from band to band as the years go by, according to the fairly equal hazard of natural selection, so the clan dynasties of the human group rise, flourish, and decline in an endless succession shaped by the chances of birth and survival under a capricious environment, by the fate of battles internecine and external, and by various other factors. The instability of the Seri organization is demonstrated by the tribal changes recorded in history, as well as by the vicissitudes within the memory of Señor Encinas and others. At the beginning of the records the Upanguayma were already exiled from Seriland proper [175] and apparently suffering from raids of their collinguals; within a century the Guayma, also, were expatriated and nearly annihilated; then, in the early part of the present century, the Tepoka were extruded and (after a series of wars in active progress in Hardy's time) forced far up the coast to one of the poorest habitats ever occupied by any folk. So, too, throughout the Encinas régime the internal dissensions continued whenever the clans were not combined against aliens; and the veteran pioneer has seen much intratribal strife, attended by the rise and passing of many chiefs, both acknowledged and pretended, and often exercising chiefly prerogatives two or three at a time. This instability grows largely out of the fact that the essential unit is the clan, and that the tribe is nothing more than a lax aggregation; and it is measurably explained by the crude customs accompanying the choice of leaders.

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As already noted, the clan organization is maternal, and the clan-mother is the central figure of the group; but the executive power resides in her brothers in the order of seniority—i. e., while the personal arrangement of the group is maternal, the appellate administration is fraternal. So far as could be ascertained, the form of government is clearly discriminable from that commonly styled avuncular; for, in the first place, the minor administration accompanying the control of property invests the elderwomen with exceptional legislative and judicative powers, while, in the second place, there are no old men (by reason of the militant habit), so that the reverence for age so assiduously cultivated in primitive life extends to matrons much more than to men. [889]

3:Davis & Dawson 2-5 (1932-1940) 1945
MUSI Seri MUSI

THE SAVAGE SERIS OF SONORA—I

By EDWARD H. DAVIS AND E. YALE DAWSON

WHEN the Seri Indians pass into extinction, "good riddance" will be voiced by many a Mexican, for centuries of warfare against the invaders of their inhospitable lands have made this small tribe notorious among the aborigines of Mexico. Many people will be ignorant of their passing, but a few of us even now watch with some regret the losing struggle of their diminishing numbers against the spreading civilization that tramples out the wild things and destroys the natural features of the earth. With the Seri goes a link with a past, primeval age of nature in America, for these are a strange and primitive people, a people whose lives and habits assign them to the initial place in the scale of cultural development among American Indians, and hence to the lowest recognized phase of savagery.

In 1540 one of Coronado's officers was the first to capture and bring into the army encampment in Sonora a Seri warrior, an Indian so large and tall that his stature created a sensation among the Spanish soldiery. It was three and a half centuries, however, before the Seri tribe was finally subjugated by an invading force, and then only after the slaughter of nine-tenths of its population.

In modern times, though the encroachment of settlements has forced the Seris into domestic contact with the Mexican people, few outsiders have ever come to know them. Until the fishing village of Kino was settled some ten years ago, there were only two men they counted real friends among aliens. The senior author was one of those. Today the Seri not only must tolerate the encroachment of the Mexican, but must suffer from imported diseases which are gradually destroying him. The present life of the Seri is but an echo of its past, but in this modern world the habits of the survivors of America's most primitive people are none the less astonishing. Their gradual acquisition of modern implements and materials has gone along with centuries of warfare and bloodshed, and their submission to law entails a long story of violence. Before considering these more recent phases of their history, however, let

[p. 193(A)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
MU21 Seri MU21

THE SAVAGE SERIS OF SONORA—II*

By EDWARD H. DAVIS AND E. YALE DAWSON

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After the Seris' first contact with the invading white man through Coronado's soldiers in 1540, they lived for nearly another century outside the influence of the civilization that was eventually to engulf them. By the early 17th century, however, pearls were discovered in the Gulf and the sailing ships that began to ply the waters introduced the first great innovation into Seri culture. The Indians found on their beaches boards from these ships and, most important, flotsam hoop-iron and nails. One of the great difficulties in constructing arrows and harpoons had been the fashioning of the point. The stone, tooth, or bone points were difficult to make and more difficult to attach securely to the shaft. The more easily worked iron proved a boon to their hunting and fishing, and later made a more satisfactory weapon of war than they had hitherto possessed.

000 The beginning of Seri wars was the year

* Continued from page 202 of preceding issue.

[p. 261(A)]

8: Ascher E-5 (1960) 1962 NU31 Seri NU31

225 In fishing for turtle, one man stands at the bow of the boat, holding the mainshaft and extension cord in one hand. When he sights a turtle, he propels the mainshaft at the animal's carapace, retaining a firm grip on the mainshaft and the extension cord. If it is struck, the turtle lurches away, loosening the foreshaft and unplugging it from the mainshaft. Tired eventually by the tension [411] applied by the fisherman on the extension cord, the turtle is finally stunned by a wooden club and lifted into the boat.

225 There is evidence that the turtle-fishing complex has consider-
175 able time depth and stability. The Seri were using similar apparatus and methods at least as early as 1825 (Hardy 1829: 296-297). At [501] this time they employed balsa boats rather than wooden boats with outboard motors and torches of cactus fibers instead of kerosene lamps. The complex continued, apparently with little change, through 1896 (McGee 1898: 187-193). Wooden boats and kerosene [177] lamps began to be adopted during the 1920s, and outboard motors were introduced in the 1940s.

411 During the entire period of 135 years (1825-1960), however, the harpoon tackle underwent only one important innovation. The 225 gasket on the foreshaft was introduced by a Seri Indian about the 176 year 1935. The addition of the gasket was related to, and coincided [439] in time with, the first attempts of the Seri to supply turtles to the commercial market. When they caught turtles solely for their own use, they did not need to keep the animals alive for very long, but when they began to sell them it became important to preserve them alive until they reached the market. The gasket acts like the hilt on a sword, preventing the entrance of the foreshaft hafting into the turtle's body. Through its contact with the carapace, it restricts the rotation of the point within the animal's body and provides a seal which inhibits the loss of blood, and thus prevents early death. After the turtle is stunned with a club and lifted into the boat, the foreshaft is removed and the hole which it made is stuffed with a piece of cloth.

124 Seri men were shown a harpoon foreshaft from a museum archive and asked what it was for and whether they themselves made similar 411 ones. If an informant acknowledged that he made them, he was asked, at the minimum, to detail the materials he used, the procedures he followed, and the approximate amount of time it would take him to produce one. Later he was requested to show the field worker examples of the foreshafts he had made. Of the approximately 40 adult Seri males, about 25 were available for questioning. Of these, approximately ten did not make foreshafts or had made them in the past but did so no longer; they were mainly older men and those [474] engaged in the administration of the Sociedad Cooperative de Pro- [887] duccion Pesquera Seri. Five men either would not or could not volunteer information. Data were obtained from the remaining ten adult men and from one eight-year-old boy; they include 21 foreshafts made by these eleven people.

411 The materials from which a foreshaft can be shaped and as-
325 sembled vary within what is available in the Seri environment. Iron

10:Davis E-5 (1922-ca. 1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

Section V

The Seri Indian

Unfinished Book Manuscript

War Chief of the Seris

The Pelican Skin Robe

175 131 Three centuries ago they were a friendly people living along the banks of the Sonora River from Hermosillo to where the flow of water sinks into the marshy banks along the coast of the Gulf of California.

175 787 The great Padre of the Pimas, Eusebio Francisco Kino, first visited the Seris in 1685, and found them "a very gentle people." After a short preachment to them he noted that "With very great insistency they begged me to remain with them and baptize them saying they would give me horses, fish and many products of the country, and that they would build me a house and a church. On three different days I said Mass in their country."

The Padre could not remain but two years later (1687), he sent Father Adan Lily to them. Lily established a mission---Santa Maria del Popula---on the banks of the River near what is now Hermosillo. The Seris remained faithful to the Padres when the whole country rose in revolt some years later.

175 [134] The withering hand of time worked against them, however. They were pushed farther and farther down onto the barren lands along the gulf coast until, finally, in a fierce and desperate retreat out into the sea and onto the desert Island of Tiburon. The swift and deadly channel between the Island and the Sonoran mainland gave them protection. They retrogressed through the centuries into a fierce and, perhaps, cannibalistic tribe.

114 [129] As late as 1922, when Edward Davis first visited Tiburon Island, a man was putting his life on the line when he stepped on the Island. But perhaps the quality of the man had something to do with it. As did Father Kino, Edward Davis was able to make friends of them.

The following manuscript is an incompleted book on the Seris which was found among his papers.

[pp. 6-138 not processed]

000 possible for producing domestic crops of any kind. There is no water
312 for irrigation, and drinking water is very scarce, rising in only a few parts of the Island in places known only to the Indians.

648 For centuries these nomads of the wastes have borne an evil repu-
[10] tation as killers and cannibals, and many an expedition to the Island for trade or exploration has never left its beautiful shores. Lured away from their boats by friendly gestures of the Indians, every last man has been killed by arrow or rifle and the expedition never heard from. No survivor has ever returned to relate his experience and, up to the time of my visit, a man risked his life to go among the Seris on their Island.

Time after time, for four hundred years, the Spaniards, and later the Mexicans, have tried to exterminate them. They have been ambushed, hunted, killed on sight for years; diseases have decimated them: they have been the Ishmaelites among the native tribes of Mexico, with every man's hand against them. Now only a small remnant survives.

[13] They have also taken heavy toll of those who have invaded their territory, which at one time extended from Altar on the north to Guaymas on the south, and from Hermosillo to the coast. When hard pressed, they retired to their Island sanctuary where, deep in the rugged ranges, they have defied pursuit. They are strong, brave, neither asking nor giving quarter in battle---men of marvelous endurance, tireless walkers, swift runners, wonderful trackers.

Within the last few years the Government has definitely set aside Tiburon as their exclusive home and sanctuary, with a strip along the mainland as their hunting and fishing ground, and where they can harvest the fruits of the giant cacti without fear of being killed. No person is allowed on this Island without special permission from the Governor of Sonora, or their Superintendent and devoted friend, Roberto Thomson. The Government has declared a permanent closed season on Seris.

• 175 As to the reputation of these nomads of the wastes of being can-
648 nibals, I quote the following extract from the *Life of Bill Fain:*
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After I had been in Yuma some time, a Yuma school teacher asked what I knew about Tiburon Island and the Seris. He said he had heard there was gold on the Island and he in company with a sailor intended to go down there. I said "Partner, I have been at the head of the Gulf several times, and interviewed many Mexican sailors and fishermen. These Seris are murderers and cannibals and my advice is, don't go, for as sure as God made little apples, you and your friend will make a fine feast for the *Tiburones.*"

He said the sailor would manage the boat and they would prospect on the Island and pack the gold out. And besides, they were going unarmed and trust themselves to the tender mercies of the most treacherous Indians in North America. I told him, "My advice is to stay just as far away from that Island as you can, if you want to teach school any longer." My advice was thrown away.

Some weeks later several mining men in skirting the coast opposite Tiburon, came across a place where the Seris had evidently been feasting on human flesh,

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near the narrow channel called *Infernillo*. They knew about the missing school teacher and sailor and without doubt this was the place where they had been eaten. There were the bones of two human beings, and there seemed to be a sort of cross, with hands severed at the wrists, nailed to the ends of the cross with big spikes, with a piece of leather, about as big as a dollar, to keep the nails from pulling through. The hands were from a white man, and many scattered papers from a valise near by, with the man's name stamped on it, was ample proof that the remains were those of the Yuma teacher and this sailor friend. The holes cut out of the valise fitted the leather washers. Even the bones were broken to extract the marrow. The teacher never showed up and everything happened just as I predicted. This was about 1893.

About a year after this, five other men left Yuma in a boat, called the *Examiner*, for Tiburon. Clark was an old frontiersman, O'Brien was a good man too, but not so old at the game; Charley Cowles was a mining man and the two *Examiner* reporters wanted to write up the Seris and the Island and hunt deer. All were fully armed. I gave Clark and O'Brien the same advice as I gave the school master and said on no account to all desert the boat; for O'Brien to make some excuse and stay in the large boat with a shot gun loaded with buckshot and land the reporters with the small skiff. I told Clark not to land but to stay in the skiff. I said they were all flying in the face of sure death once they landed. Charley disembarked at the mouth of a river and left for the interior.

When the boat got close to the Island, it was anchored according to my instructions and Clark and the reporters got in the skiff and were rowed close to shore, when the reporters jumped out and waded. Twelve or fifteen wild natives had emerged from the brush and were making signs of friendship and they shook hands all around with the reporters. One of the men could talk Spanish and he asked about deer and one of the Indians pointed to the mountains of the interior and said, *"Si Senor, bastante venado."* So they all started inland and were soon concealed by the brush.

Of course, even two men fully armed and good gun men, would stand no chance with that number of wild natives.

Soon after they had disappeared around the point of a hill, the men in the boats heard the crack of a gun, followed by the scream of a man in mortal anguish. The men never showed up and Clark started for the big boat in his skiff. About this time, a great buck Indian started out in a dugout canoe to cut him off. O'Brien had kept himself concealed until the Indian came within range, when he raised up and threatened to shoot, and waved him back.

He went back all right, and as soon as Clark came aboard, they raised the anchor and sailed south to Guaymas, sold the boat, and returned by train. They give me the details as here recorded. Friends of the newspapermen took the matter up with the authorities at Washington and they had some diplomatic exchanges with the Mexican Government. Mexico answered: "If you don't want your Americans killed, keep them away from Tiburon."

[*Life of Bill Fain*, unpublished manuscript from the Davis collection.]

About 1893 George Porter and John Johnson fitted out the small sloop *World* in San Diego, to go down in the Gulf for shells and curios, and trade with the Seris. They came to grief in the same way. The men were lured ashore by the friendly attitude of the natives, led up the beach, then retreat cut off and they were shot down and "eaten by the Seris."

Dr. [W J]-McGee of the Smithsonian Institute of Washington, in 1895, visited the Island with a party of scientists to study the

[text continues on p. 146]

175 Indians. Dr. McGee, confirming Bill Fain's story of the disappearance
648 of Robinson and Logan, the San Francisco newspapermen, secured the
266 facts from a Seri who spoke Spanish, as follows:

> On reaching the Island, Robinson and Logan asked the natives if there were any deer to be shot and receiving an affirmative reply, they started for the interior toward the mountain with several Seris as escort, leaving the two other men with the boats. On the face of it, this was a most foolhardy performance and Robinson actually loaned his rifle to one of the Seris, who accompanied him. The Seri shot Logan in the back and wounded Robinson who called for help. In trying to escape he stumbled and fell and the Indians beat his brains out with rocks.

On the Gulf Coast, this list of killed and of course eaten, could be greatly enlarged and leads to the fact that, up to recent years, no stranger---American, Mexican or Indian---could land on Tiburon and live. Ever since Sonora was settled, two or three hundred years ago, the Island has borne a sinister reputation and up to recent years, it has lived up to its reputation. Even now, no one is allowed to land on the Island without permission of the Governor or the Superintendent.

[191] The Island of Tiburon is isolated, its approaches guarded by deserts and sea, and its people the wildest and most primitive race in North America---every man's hand against them, and they against every body.

175 Dr. McGee's investigations in 1895 failed to convict the Seris of
648 cannibalism or of eating any part of either whites or Indians, killed
266 on the Island or killed in battle. This reputation of cannibalism is
114 prevalent in Mexico as well as in the United States, but the charge has never been proven.

It is true, they eat the flesh of animals raw as well as partially cooked, and that may have given rise to this gruesome reputation, but my own investigations covering several visits on the Island and on the Sonoran coast, failed to convince me that they had eaten human flesh. They told me themselves they had not, and if all reports of cannibalism by the Seris were traced back to their source, they would end in surmise or guesswork. No one, so far as I have been able to find, has actually seen a Seri eat human flesh. Until such a witness can be produced, the Seri remains unconvicted.

Let us examine the so-called evidence of the mining men, as quoted by Bill Fain: the finding of a white man's hands spiked to a cross, and the schoolmaster's papers scattered on the Gulf Coast of Sonora. This evidence is too circumstantial. The discs of leather even fitted the holes in the bag.

In the first place, nails are scarce in Sonora, and no Seri at that time would risk his life to procure nails or spikes at any ranch. Nearly all woods in that region are hard and would almost certainly turn a nail. The Seris had no axes to chop trees to make crosses, and

175 if they were as hungry then as they are today, they would not stop to
648 spike a man up preparatory to serving him. Their only tools then were
266 rocks to use as hammers and hoop iron for knives, and these are in
114 universal use today.
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There is no doubt that the men were killed, but I think these mining men purposely exaggerated their findings, if any.

648 There is no doubt that the Seris were brave fighters, treacherous
721 murderers, sparing neither men, women or children on their raids,
727 killing ruthlessly. But there is one charge which cannot be brought against them, which cannot be said of many tribes north of the border. So far as I could find out, they never tortured nor scalped.

648 The Seris never took prisoners and they never inter-married with
721 other tribes, so their strain is pure.
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There was one exception. Sixty or seventy years ago, the Seri
563 Chief Coyote Iguana and his band of warriors held up the stage between Hermosillo and Guaymas, and killed all except a handsome Spanish girl of the better class. This girl, Coyote Iguana made his wife and by her raised a family. One granddaughter still survived in 1924, and while more attractive than the general run of Seri, her complexion was fully as dark.

800 The Seris, Ishmaelites among the native tribes of Mexico---the most fascinating Indians in North America!

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123 *Reception Committee, Tiburon Island - 1936*
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On the twenty-fifth of April, nineteen twenty-two, I engaged the services of Roberto Thompson, who with his father and grandfather

[text continues on p. 149]

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BAND V

It was stated above that this band fought with Band II and then with Band I. Since Band V was likely killing cattle, they also may have been harassed by soldiers. Eventually Band V abandoned its territory near Punta Tepopa and headed south along the coast to a camp near present-day Bahia Kino. From this camp the entire group disappeared and was never seen again by members of the other bands. The Seri of today believe that Band V either traveled inland or was destroyed by a non-Seri force.

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BAND II

These people were rustlers and marauders. Government intervention in the situation was inevitable. The Seri recount the following final encounter between this group and the government forces.

The entire remaining membership of Band II was hiding out in a nearly inaccessible swamp thicket at Bahia Kino. Knowing that an armed force of soldiers and ranchers was searching for them, the people left their camp to seek safety elsewhere. Almost immediately they were attacked by the superior armed force which proceeded to wipe out the whole group. A youth who had avoided capture is said to have reported the affair to the Seri on Tiburon Island. This event may have occurred during the Encinas Wars fought from 1855 to 1865.

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BAND VI

The members of this band on San Esteban Island were little interested in the mainland and did not participate in the raids on man and livestock there. Nevertheless, they were to share in the severe punishment meted out to the bands guilty of multitudinous depredations.

Sometime after the massacre of Band II, a ship arrived at San Esteban, and many of the people were induced to go aboard. The rest of the inhabitants followed the ship to a camp on the eastern side of Tiburon Island where they were to receive gifts. As the people congregated, they were herded into a stone corral. Apparently, some of the San Esteban men were killed at this time. The rest of them, along with the women and children, were taken to Santa Rosa point on the mainland. Here, the Seri say, more of the men were killed. The remaining men were strung together by wire and led away, never to return.

The San Esteban women and children, along with some Tiburon Island women and children (of Band III), were taken in